



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

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Summary of the Current Situation

As of the end of July there are 120 political prisoners in Burma, with 448 activists awaiting trial.

July, 2015

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"There can be no national reconciliation in Burma, as long as there are political prisoners"

MONTH IN REVIEW

This month, 16 people were arrested and charged, 15 were indicted, 21 were sentenced, and 17 were released. Five political prisoners are reported to be in bad health.

Among those reported to be in bad health are students detained in Tharyarwaddy Prison following the violent crackdown on the student protests against the National Education Law. Fourteen of the students and their supporters were released on bail in July, however 63 remain in detention. On-going health concerns among the students that remain in detention have prompted their parents to submit a request to the court early this month demanding that an external doctor address the detainees' health problems.

On July 27, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) met with a group of students who were present during the March 10 crackdown in Letpadan. The students had filed a case with the MNHRC providing testimony from victims of the crackdown and making a case that the authorities' brutality was unlawful. The students also objected to the decision to charge the students under Burma's Penal Code. According to the Democracy Education Initiative Committee, students from the committee plan to sue the authorities who ordered the unnecessarily brutal March 10 crackdown on peaceful protesters.

This month also saw the announcement of Burma's long-awaited general election date - on July 8, the Union Election Commission (UEC) announced the election is to be held on November 8, 2015. A total of 1,142 MP seats will be up for grabs. Three hundred and thirty constituencies were confirmed for the lower house, 168 for the upper house, and 644 for regional parliaments. A further 29 regional seats will be appointed to ethnic representatives.

In light of the election date announcement, the Former Political Prisoners Society (FPPS) sent a letter to lawmakers including the military-backed Union Solidarity Development Party (USDP), urging them to call for the release of all political prisoners ahead of the election.

However, in yet another move to officially deny the existence of political prisoners in Burma, the Deputy Minister for Home Affairs this month told parliament that the term "political prisoners" is unconstitutional and violates the rights of prisoners to the same legal status. Chairperson for the National League for Democracy (NLD), Aung San Suu Kyi, stated that the statement made by the minister was inconsistent with government policy: "The government itself formed a committee to oversee the release of political prisoners. Now the deputy Home Affairs minister is rejecting the term. I think this is inconsistent."

At the end of the month, on July 30, the Ministry of Information announced the release of 6,966 prisoners, including 210 foreign detainees, in the first Presidential amnesty since October 2014. Only 13 political prisoners were included in the release.

[\(July 3, 2015 - DVB\)](#) [\(July 8, 2015 - The Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(July 8, 2015 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(July 15, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(July 22, 2015 - DVB\)](#) [\(July 27, 2015 - The Irrawaddy\)](#)

DETENTIONS

Three Interfaith Activists Arrested

Three members of the interfaith group Thint Myat Lo Thu Myar - Zaw Zaw Latt, Pwint Phyu Latt, and Zaw Win Bo - were arrested this month. Thint Myat Lo Thu Myar aims to reconcile members of different religions and in particular promote dialogue between Muslims and Buddhists. On July 14, Zaw Zaw Latt was arrested by plain-clothes police for posting a photograph online of himself holding a gun during a visit to conflict-torn Kachin State in 2013. Pwint Phyu Latt was arrested on July 19 and detained after being summoned for questioning relating to the case of her colleague, Zaw Zaw Latt. They are both facing charges under Section 17 (1) of the Unlawful Association Act, after they, along with other members of Thing Myat Lo Thu Myar, went to visit refugee camps controlled by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) to give donations to the refugees. The members posted photographs of this trip to Facebook. The two are also facing charges under Section 13 (1) of the Immigration Act for going to Mizoram State, India, in April 2015. In addition, Zaw Win Bo was arrested on July 30 for also going to Mizoram State with Zaw Zaw Latt and Pwint Phyu Latt. On the same day, a monk and three more members of Thint Myat Lo Thu Myar were issued an arrest warrant.

The three who have already been arrested are currently detained in Obo prison, Mandalay.

[\(July 16, 2015 - DVB\)](#) [\(July 21, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(July 28, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(July 30, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

Activist Su Su Nway Arrested for Trespassing

On July 23, activist Su Su Nway was arrested by police in Inn Da Kaw Township, Bago Division, on charges of trespassing in relation to her support for farmers who claim over 1,000 hectares of their land has been seized by the

military. Su Su Nway has been working on the case since 2013 and went to the area several times to examine the farmers' claims and liaise with authorities on their behalf. In early June police informed Su Su Nway a case had been opened against her and was summoned for a court hearing, which she failed to attend.

Her husband Kyaw Kyaw Htwe, has suggested the charges are politically motivated: "To sue her only now is to intentionally weaken the pro-democracy force as the 2015 election nears."

Her trial began on July 29.

[\(July 24, 2015 - The Irrawaddy\)](#)

Solo Protester Arrested

On July 20, Phyo Wai Kyaw was arrested after staging a protest in front of a statue of General Aung San in Naypyidaw against judge Htay Aung's request for a bribe in another case against him. Phyo Wai Kyaw is also facing charges under Section 18 for staging a solo protest in October 2014. Solo protesting is not illegal under Section 18, with the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law having no provisions within for the detention of solo protesters.

Three DKBA Members Arrested

On July 13, two army majors - Thaye Ni and Waiy Htoo - from the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) were arrested by the Burma Army in Bilin Township, Mon State, while making their way to Rangoon to pick up general Saw Lar Bwal of the DKBA, who was returning from Singapore after receiving hospital treatment. The DKBA and family members of the detainees have voiced concerns as to why the two men were arrested, their whereabouts, and potential mistreatment. The authorities have confirmed the arrest.

A further member of the DKBA, Saw Than Aung, was arrested on July 4 at the DKBA's

DETENTIONS

Myawaddy office, and charged under Section 17 (1) of the Unlawful Association Act.

[\(July 15, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

Activist Arrested for Possession of Protest Video Footage

On July 10, farmers and workers rights activist Kyaw Swe Latt had his house searched by police officials from Lal Way township police station. He was arrested under Section 32 (b) of the Television and Video Law, for possession of video footage of a protest staged by Mongkhat township residents for the release of Yae Pu Sayar, which he had documented. Section 32 (b) Video Act states that if anyone is found guilty for owning a video tape which is not censored, he or she will be sentenced to three years imprisonment or made to pay a fine of 100, 000 kyat. Kyaw Swe Latt remains in detention in Lal Way township police station. His most recent court hearing was set for August 4.

[\(July 24, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

Nineteen Year-old Karen girl Arrested by Government Troops Amid Clashes

On July 7, 1,000 villagers were displaced after clashes broke out between government troops and the DKBA at approximately 2pm, in Kawkariiek township. A 19-year-old Karen girl, Naw Kar War, from Naw Bo Kalo village, was arrested by the Burma Army's light infantry battalion 549 while she was harvesting with her father. Village residents, unaware of where the girl is being held, are concerned for her safety, in particular in relation to potential rape and murder.

Two Student Leaders Arrested after Rally at Rangoon University

On July 7, Zeya Lwin and Paing Phyto Min - two leading members of the Confederation of University Student Unions - were arrested by plain-clothes police after attending a rally to commemorate the killing of dozens of student protestors by the military on July 7, 1962, and the subsequent destruction of the students union by the military. Paing Phyto Min was charged under Section 18 and later released. Zeya Lwin remains in detention in Insein prison. He faces additional charges for protests that called for the resignation of the military MPs in Burma's parliament.

[\(July 7, 2015 - The Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(July 8, 2015 - DVB\)](#)

Five Student Leaders Charged for Protest Calling for Military MPs' Resignation

On July 1, five student leaders, Paing Ye Thu, Zeya Lwin, Nan Linn, Min Kyaw Thu and Ye Zarni Tun, were charged under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act by Pabedan and Kyautada township courts in Rangoon. They were charged after staging a protest on June 30 in Rangoon, calling for constitutional reform and the resignation of the military MPs in Burma's parliament.

Zeya Lwin, Paing Ye Thu and Nan Linn face additional charges under Section 505(b) of the Penal Code. Arrest warrants were issued for the three on July 3. While Nan Linn remains at large, the trial for Zeya Lwin and Paing Ye Thu began on July 15.

Min Thu Kyaw and Ye Zarni Tun were sent official letters from the police informing them of their charges under Section 18. The letters requested the two present themselves at Pabedan Township police station by July 24.

[\(July 1, 2015 - RFA/ Burmese\)](#) [\(July 3, 2015 -](#)

Detentions

[DVB\) \(Eleven\) \(July 15, 2015 -The Irrawaddy\) \(July 23, 2015 - Free Burma Records\)](#)

Four More Students Arrested in Relation to Letpadan Student Protest

On July 1, police arrested four Mandalay Yadanarbone University students, Naing Ye Wai, Aung San Oo, Nyan Lin Htet and Jit Tu, under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act, and Sections 143, 147 and Section 505 (b) of the Penal Code. The students, all members of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), were arrested following their involvement in the Letpadan student protest against the National Education Bill, and for spraying graffiti on a wall at their university, denouncing the crackdown of the student protest.

They are currently being held in Obo prison, Mandalay.

[\(July 1, 2015 - RFA/ Burmese\)](#)

INCARCERATIONS

Activist Sentenced to Six Months

On July 30, activist Thant Zin Htet, a member of the All Burma Federation of Student Union (ABFSU), was sentenced to six months imprisonment and sent to Paunde Prison for assisting farmers from Thae Gone township who had had their lands confiscated.

[\(July 30, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

Three Female Activists Sentenced for Prayer Session

On July 10, three female activists - Myint Myint Aye of the Social Assistance Network; the NLD's district information officer Khin May Si; and May Thet Oo of the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society - were sentenced to four months in prison in a closed court hearing in Mandalay Division's Meikhtila District. The activists were charged under Section 18 for organising a peaceful a peaceful prayer session on March 3 calling for nonviolence during the student protests against the National Education Law in Letpadan. Han Su Yi, their lawyer, said the guilty verdict was "unfair".

Myint Myint Aye was also sentenced to an additional two months in prison for trespassing, following a plough protest held on military-confiscated land in Meikhtila in May.

[\(July 10, 2015 - DVB\)](#) [\(July 10, 2015 - RFA\)](#)

Four Activists Handed Additional Sentences

On July 10, Nay Myo Zin, Naw Ohn Hla, Than Swe and Tin Htut Paing, were handed an additional four month prison sentence each under section 18 at Latha township court. The additional sentence was for staging a protest calling for an investigation into the death of Khin Win, who died during a protest against the Letpadaung copper mine. Their protest involved marching from the City Hall to the Chinese

Embassy in Rangoon, and as such, they have been charged by officials from six township police stations. They have already been sentenced by four of the six township courts.

Nay Myo Zin is serving four years and eight months; Naw Ohn Hla is serving five years and six months; Ba Myint is serving two years and 11 months; Thin Htut Paing is serving five years and three months; and Than Swe is serving five years. They still have cases ongoing in the other two townships.

[\(July 10, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(July 11, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

Protester Ba Myint, Handed Multiple Additional Sentences

On July 8, 2015, Ba Myint an activist imprisoned in Insein prison, was handed an additional eight month sentence by Kyauktada township court. He received four months for staging a protest in front of Rangoon City Hall calling for an investigation into the death of Khin Win at the site of the Letpadaung copper mine project. He was given a further four months for holding a commemoration for the monks that were injured during the violent crackdown of the Letpadaung copper mine protesters in 2012.

On July 10, 2015, along with four other activists, Ba Myint was handed a further four-month sentence for staging a protest calling for an investigation into the death of Khin Win, who died during a protest against the Letpadaung copper mine.

He is now serving a total of two years and 11 months in Insein prison. Meanwhile, he is still facing trial under 13 counts of Section 18 by six different townships.

[\(July 8, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(July 10, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

INCARCERATIONS

Solo Protester Sentenced to Two Years in Prison

On May 25, Win Hlaing, was arrested for protesting outside the Tharyarwaddy courthouse and in his home town, calling for the release of students and activists detained in Tharyarwaddy Prison. He was charged with multiple counts of holding unlawful rallies under the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act and sentenced to two years in prison for sedition.

[\(July 2, 2015 - DVB\)](#)

RELEASES

Student Activist Facing Trial Po Po Freed on Bail on July 30.

Po Po has been released on bail, and is still facing trial for her role in the student protests in March 2015.

[\(July 31,2015-DVB\)](#)

At Least 13 Political Prisoners Released under Presidential Amnesty

On July 30, the Ministry of Information announced the release of 6,966 prisoners in the first Presidential amnesty since October 2014. Included in the release were 13 political prisoners: the five Bi-Midday Sun journalists - Kyaw Zaw Hein, Win Tin, Thura Aung, Yin Min Htun and Kyaw Min Khaing; land rights activist Sein Thein; activist and member of the Movement for Democratic Current Force (MDCF) Tin Maung Kyi; farmers Kaung Tun and Myint Aung; goldminers Min Zaw Oo and Boe Boe Aung aka Win Soe; Karen National Union (KNU) member Aung Ko Latt; and army major Kyaw Sar Win, imprisoned for signing a petition calling for constitutional amendment.

Two Demonstrators Released from Prome Prison

On July 30, lawyer Myint Aye, and activist Myo Thu Htut, were released on completion of their sentences from Prome prison. They had been imprisoned for participating in a demonstration calling for the reconstruction of the student union building that was destroyed in 1962.

Myint Aye still faces two charges under Section 18.

[\(July 30, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

Two Land Rights Activists Released

On July 24, land rights activists Kyaw Naing and Phoe La Pyae were released from Meiktila prison. They had been sentenced on May 26 to two months imprisonment under Section 447 of the Penal Code for trespassing after being

arrested in relation to a land dispute in Wundwin Township, Mandalay Division.

Fourteen Students Facing Trial Released on Bail

On July 7, the Tharyarwaddy district court granted bail to 11 student activists detained in Tharyarwaddy prison, facing trial for their involvement in the Letpadan student protests. The students - Than Swe, Waiyan Min Lwin, Ye Wint Aung, [another] Ye Wint Aung (a.k.a. Shwekyal Moe), Min Chit Thu, Min Thu Shein, Myat Min Maw, Kyaw Zaw Khant, Ko Tin Oo, Thet Tun Paing and Ma Than Aye - remained in detention until July 14, when they were released at a court hearing. Each detainee had to provide proof of at least US\$10,000 worth of assets held by no more than two guarantors. Tin Win, a student hospitalised in Rangoon hospital, was also freed on bail the same day.

A further two students, Min Min Soe and Khain Hlaing, were released on bail on July 21.

[\(July 7, 2015 - DVB\)](#) [\(July 7, 2015 - The Irrawaddy\)](#)

Eight Released from Custody after Links to Arakan Army Prove to be False

Eight people who had been arrested due to suspected links with the Arakan Army (AA), were released from police custody by Kyauktaw township police station on July 2, after the claims were proved false.

[\(July 6, 2015 - The Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#) [\(July 8, 2015 - Myanmar Times\)](#)

CONDITIONS OF DETENTIONS

Political Prisoner Showing Signs of Mental Strain

This month it has been made known that veteran activist Htin Kyaw, leader of the Myanmar Democratic Central Force (MDCF), is suffering from mental stress, according to his wife. Htin Kyaw was sentenced in 2014 after 12 different courts found him guilty of causing public alarm - during a solo demonstration. He is currently serving a 13 years and four month sentence. In addition, Htin Kyaw is staging a protest by refusing to shave or cut his hair after discovering a plot against his life in prison, after one of the involved admitted it to him. Htin Kyaw claims the Minister of Home Affairs directly instructed the plot.

[\(July 23, 2015 - DVB\)](#)

Parents of Letpadan Student Detainees Submit Request for External Health Assistance for the Detainees, Citing Ongoing Health Issues

On July 14, the parents of the students detained for their involvement with the student protests against the National Education Law in Letpadan, submitted a letter to the court requesting that 36 of the students have access to external doctors to address their health issues. The parents claim the students and their supporters were harshly beaten by the police during the crackdown, and have since been suffering from a number of issues including abdominal pain, stomach aches, nerve damage, and vomiting. According to Min Thway Thit's father, Than Win, "if our submission is accepted by the judge, the Free Funeral Service (FFS) Charman Kyaw Thu will come to the prison with FFS's specialists to check their health condition."

[\(July 14, 2015 - The Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#)

Political Detainee Alleges Mistreatment in Hospital, Plans to go on Hunger Strike

Since his arrest in February 2015 for supporting farmers who had their land confiscated by the authorities, Thant Zin Htet has been suffering from heart disease, gastric problems and diarrhea.

On July 5, he was hospitalized at the public hospital in Thegon township, Pegu division. According to Thant Zin Htet, while he was hospitalized he was handcuffed and his hands and legs were tied with iron chains to the bed poles. On July 9, the Thegon township police chief came to the hospital and ordered that his hands and legs be tied tightly so he could not bend them.

"As I was displeased with this, I demanded he apologize within three days. If he does not give an apology, I will go on hunger strike until I die," said Thant Zin Htet.

[\(July 10, 2015 - The Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#)

Former Prison Doctor calls for Improved Healthcare for Political Prisoners

On July 6, former prison doctor, Dr. Tint Swe, revealed the inadequate healthcare available to prisoners in Burma's jails, especially in relation to female detainees. He also commented on the routine beatings, torture and other abuses perpetrated by the prison guards and police, who enjoy impunity for their actions. As a result, Dr. Tint Swe treated many patients suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) during his time as a prison doctor.

"It's not a stretch to say the prisons are like hell," Dr. Tint Swe remarked, adding "the health of our political prisoners is an emergency."

[\(July 6, 2015 - DVB\)](#)

Seven Student Activists Placed in Solitary Confinement

Seven activists - Than Htike, Aung Myint Han, Kyaw Zaw Linn, Khant Aung, Hein Zaw Win, Yan Naing Soe and Kyaw Kyaw Tun - arrested for their involvement with the Letpadan student protests, were placed in solitary confinement from June 30 to July 13 as a punishment for bringing cigarettes and betel nuts with them into prison.

In addition, they were charged on July 16 under Section 42 for bringing prohibited items into prison. If found guilty, they will be sentenced to pay a 200 kyat fine, or imprisonment of six months, according to their lawyer, Hla Myo Myint.

[\(July 2, 2015 - DVB\) \(July 16, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

DEMONSTRATIONS AND RELATED RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Five Activists Were Found Guilty for Peaceful Protest

On July 22, prominent 88 Generation student leader Ko Ko Gyi and four other activists were sentenced to 21 days imprisonment, or a fine of 10,000 kyats. The five were charged under Section 19 for staging a march in December 2014 against the redevelopment of a local sports ground in Okkalar Township. The protesters wish to see the land returned to public use. Following the verdict, Ko Ko Gyi announced he would opt to serve the prison term, however an unknown benefactor intervened and paid the fines on behalf of the five activists.

Ko Ko Gyi had announced on July 19 that he intended to run for the NLD in November's general election. According to the defendants' lawyer, Robert San Aung, the anonymous benefactor had paid the fine so that Ko Ko Gyi could stand for office in the upcoming election. [\(July 22, 2015 - The Irrawaddy\)](#)

Nine Media Workers Acquitted of Defamation Charges, Two Found Guilty and Fined

On July 21, nine employees of the Myanmar Herald were acquitted of defamation charges by a court in Naypyidaw. The charges were brought by the Ministry of Information under Article 25 (b) of the Media Law after the paper ran an interview in August 2014 in which political scientist Myo Yan Naung Thein criticised the president for spouting "gibberish, irrational, cheap, and inconsistent words" that were "completely nonsensical, absurd, and insane."

Two editors however - the former chief editor at the Myanmar Herald Kyaw Swa Win, and the journal's deputy editor Win Ko Ko Oo -

were found guilty of defaming Thein Sein and sentenced to serve six months in prison or pay a fine of one million kyat each. The two opted to pay the fine but plan to appeal the verdict.

The current chief editor at the Myanmar Herald, Aung Kyaw Min, condemned the ruling stating: "If they want [Burma] to become a democratic country, they shouldn't restrict the press."

[\(July 21, 2015 - RFA\)](#) [\(July 22, 2014 - DVB\)](#)

Six Students Charged for Organizing Commemoration Marking Violent Student Crackdown

On July 7, six students were charged under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act for their involvement in a commemoration marking the anniversary of the violent crackdown against students which ended student protests against unjust university regulations and saw over 100 students die on July 7, 1962. The commemorations took place in front of Monywa University and also Technology University, Monywa, on that same day.

Monywa Technology University Student Union member Wai Moe Naing said: "Myself and a girl were charged under two counts of Section 18 for organizing the commemoration in two different places, the other six were charged under one count of Section 18." Monywa No-1 police station police also confirmed that six students were charged under section 18.

[\(July 9, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

DEMONSTRATIONS AND RELATED RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Five Activists Sentenced for Organizing Rally

On July 8, five activists - Min Lwin Oo, Zin Maung Phyoe, Zaw Lwin Aung, Yuwah Lwin and Thura Naing - were sentenced to one month in prison or a 30,000-kyat fine by the Tavoy Township Court. They were charged under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act for organizing a rally without permission on March 27, following the the Letpadan crackdown. They chose to pay the fine.

[\(July 9, 2015 - DVB\)](#)

LAND ISSUES

Military Headquarter Close Case against Karen Party Leader and 17 Farmers

This month, the deputy captain of the Rangoon Divisional Military Headquarters, Myint Saung, closed the case against Mhan Ohn Myint Thein, chairman of the Karen People's Party, and 17 farmers who had attempted to re-harvest land in Yae-Twin-Kone and Ah-Bay villages, which were confiscated by the military in 1994. The farmers were charged under Section 447 of the Penal Code for trespassing in 2013.

[\(July 14, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

Pantanaw Farmers Protest Against Land Grabs

On July 10, local farmers from Pantanaw Township staged a protest demanding the return of over 1,000 acres of farmland they claim was confiscated in 1999-2000 by the military-backed Pho Lamin Company. The farmers state that they received no compensation from the company prior to, or after their eviction, and have been calling for the return of their land since President Thein Sein's government took office in 2011, but their demands have repeatedly been ignored. The July 10 protest was held with official permission from local police. Demonstrators demanded official land registration programmes; the suspension of fishery operations on the confiscated farmland; and the eviction of the Pho Lamin Company from the region.

[\(July 11, 2015 - DVB\)](#)

Villagers Embroiled in Land Dispute at Mandalay Gold Mine Plan to Sue Police after Clash

On July 6, a clash broke out between police and

residents from Yay Htwat village in Thabeikkyin Township, Mandalay Division, which saw one villager shot and several others injured. The clash was a result of a land dispute which began earlier this year when the Myanmar Sithu Company began operating a gold mine, which villagers claim is encroaching on village-owned land.

According to the village chief, the clash occurred after Myanmar Sithu Company security staff arrested a youth named Pyar Chone, without legitimate cause. As the villagers went to ask for his release, the police opened fire. Chit Khae, a villager who was shot in the knee, is awaiting surgery at Mandalay Hospital.

Villagers complain that security personnel from the company have threatened locals, yet despite informing the police and the authorities, no action has been taken. May Lwin, a village elder comments: "That's why we are planning to sue the police and the local authorities for failing to protect us, and instead harming us and shooting at us. If they had not ignored our complaints since the beginning, there would have been no clash like this."

[\(July 15, 2015 - The Irrawaddy\)](#)

Further Clashes Between Local Residents and Letpadaung Copper Mine Company

On July 5, a clash broke out between residents of Moe Kyo Phyin Ahlal and Hse Te villages, and police after Wanbao Company fenced off over 700 acres of land that approximately 30 farmers claim to own. The disputed land is situated in the area of the highly contested Letpadaung copper mine, operated by Wanbao Company. Several villagers were injured in the clash.

LAND ISSUES

According to Ye Win, a villager from Hse Te village, the clashes broke out when the villagers attempted to prevent the company employees from fencing off the land: “As the company staff started to shoot with the catapults, the residents got injuries on their forehead, eyebrows and lips. Some of the residents’ teeth were broken. Around 30 villagers got injuries and they have suffered from chest and back pain.”

[\(July 6, 2015 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

Land Rights Proponent Shot Dead in Hpa-An

On July 2, 2015, in the early hours of the morning, Saw Johnny, a leading land rights proponent and local leader for the NLD party was shot dead outside of his house by unknown assailants. Saw Johnny had been a known advocate for farmers rights and had assisted locals in several land grab cases. In addition, he had previously exposed irregularities in the sale of land plots owned by the Ministry of Cooperatives. A funeral was held for Saw Johnny on July 3.

[\(July 3, 2015 - DVB\)](#)

Key International Developments

US Embassy Criticizes Increasing use of Section 18 to Arrest Protesters

The US embassy in Rangoon announced on July 15 that “the United States is concerned over continued reports of arrests and excessive prison terms handed down to peaceful protesters under Article 18.” Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act stipulates that protesters acquire prior permission at least five days before gathering, or face up to a year in prison. The announcement went on to say: “Free exercise of [rights of peaceful expression and assembly] will be particularly important during the upcoming election season as a measure of the election’s transparency, inclusiveness and credibility, and we urge authorities to ensure those democratic rights are protected in the coming months.”

[\(July 17, 2015 - Myanmar Times\)](#)

Conclusion / Analysis

In light of the announcement of Burma's upcoming election on November 8, the need to release political prisoners and activists awaiting trial is more pressing than ever if Burma is to ensure their voting rights. Former political prisoner groups have been pressing the president and lawmakers, writing letters calling for their release. In addition, the international community has once again begun to turn its focus to the political prisoner issue, clamoring for the release of Burma's political prisoners ahead of the general election.

Although no prior notice was given, the Presidential amnesty of 6,966 prisoners announced on July 30, came as no major surprise then. While the amnesty is likely to have been intended to placate both domestic and international observers, it is important to note that only 13 political prisoners were included in the amnesty, all of which were serving relatively short sentences, or whose sentences were almost complete. Yet, included in the amnesty were 155 Chinese loggers, 153 of which had recently been sentenced to life imprisonment for illegal logging. The release of thousands of criminal prisoners, and in particular the backtracking shown in the case of the Chinese loggers, raises serious concern over the validity of the rule of law in Burma and poses a threat to Burma's sovereignty. This amnesty also

highlights how urgently reforms are needed in this area.

Moreover, with less than four months until the election, the government is increasingly arresting and detaining activists for their political activities. In fact the government's increasingly overzealous use of Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act has prompted the US embassy in Rangoon to make an announcement this month criticizing its usage to arrest and imprison peaceful protesters. In addition, several imprisoned activists were handed additional sentences this month - by using multiple laws in conjunction with each other to charge activists, or by charging activists under multiple townships for the same offence, the authorities maximize the duration of their imprisonment. These tactics serve to ensure activists will remain in prison during the election period and beyond.

With the election drawing ever closer, it is unacceptable that peaceful political and human rights activists be detained, charged and imprisoned for campaigning for a better democratic future in Burma. Political prisoners must be unconditionally released before the elections in November, all ongoing trials must be ended, and all charges dropped against political and human rights campaigners.

Links / Resources

July 2

[Seven Activists Placed in Solitary Confinement \(DVB\)](#)
[Activist Sentenced to Two Years in Prison \(DVB\)](#)

July 3

[Five Student Charged for Asking Military MP Resignation \(DVB\)](#)
[Union Election Commission Announces Elections Date \(DVB\)](#)

[Five Students Charged for Asking Military MP Resignation \(Eleven\)](#)

July 6

[Political Prisoners need Healthcare too \(DVB\)](#)

July 7

[Eight Released for no Link with Arakan Army \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

[Five Students Charged for Asking Military MP Resignation \(The Irrawaddy\)](#)
[Eleven Students Released on Bail \(DVB\)](#)

[Bail Set at \\$10k for 11 Letpadan Activists \(The Irrawaddy\)](#)

July 8

[Former Political Prisoners Society Asks for Release of Political Prisoners \(Myanmar Times\)](#)
[Union Election Commission Announces Elections Date \(The Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Two Arrested after Students' Rally at Rangoon University \(DVB\)](#)

July 9

[Five Activists Sentenced for Organizing Rally \(DVB\)](#)

July 10

[Female Activists Sentenced](#)

[for Prayer Session in Mandalay \(DVB\)](#)
[Activists Handed Additional Sentence \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

July 11

[Pantanaw Farmers Rally Against Land Grabs \(DVB\)](#)

July 14

[Students' Parents Claim Detained Students Required to see External Doctors \(The Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#)
[Military Headquarter Closed the Case of Karen Party Leader and Seventeen Farmers \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

July 15

[Villagers Plan to Sue Police After Clash at Mandalay Gold Mine \(The Irrawaddy\)](#)
[Trial Begins for Students Protesting Military MPs \(The Irrawaddy\)](#)

July 16

[Interfaith Activist Arrested after Posting Pic with Assault Rifle \(DVB\)](#)
[Detained Students and Supporters in Punishment Cell, Charged for Taking Prohibited Materials \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

July 17

[US Speaks out over Recent Protest Arrests \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

July 21

[Myanmar Court Finds Two Journalists Guilty of Defamation \(RFA\)](#)

July 22

[NLD Candidate Ko Ko Gyi Guilty of Illegal Protest But Spared Prison \(The Irrawaddy\)](#)
[Myanmar Herald Editors](#)

[Fined for Insulting President \(DVB\)](#)

[MPs Debate Definition of 'Political Prisoner' \(DVB\)](#)

July 23

[Prison Takes its Toll on Veteran Activist \(DVB\)](#)

July 24

[Activist Su Su Nway Arrested for Trespassing \(The Irrawaddy\)](#)
[Activist had a Protest Video Tape, Arrested \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

July 31

[Student Activist Po Po Released on Bail \(DVB\)](#)

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